

DeMolays and Young Freemasons - Why Did They Go?

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Regional Provost Newsletter, Region 10

March 1, 2023

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Perspective: A particular attitude toward or way of regarding something; a point of view.

Whose perspective is impacted the most when joining Freemasonry after having an accomplished journey through DeMolay? Is it the other Brethren? The other Young Men of DeMolay? The DeMolay Advisors? My perspective on joining Masonry from DeMolay is based on two Young Men: Member A and Member B. Both members had very successful careers in DeMolay. They ascended through the ranks and earned honors in their chapters and through State leadership. Both members joined Masonry when they finished serving their devoted time in DeMolay. Member A joined Masonry while attending a four-year college, working part-time, and maintaining a serious relationship with his girlfriend. Member B did not attend college, works a nine to five job, and is an active DeMolay advisor. Both members joined at the same age, recited all three catechisms, and joined a Lodge whose members were familiar to them from their younger years. Member A has not attended Lodge in over three years. Member B went straight to filling Lodge chairs and is actively participating in Lodge functions. What caused the difference in their involvement?

Brethren, you are influential. As DeMolays engage in local Lodge activities, why does their exposure to our Lodge culture change so much once they are a Mason? When I was

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coming around my Lodge as a young man, I knew a lot of Brethren that I was excited to be around and eventually call my Brother. I was treated like one of their own, even when I was 12 years old. Then I joined Lodge, and experienced a major culture shock. I was now thrown into the "fire" where some members' thoughts and ideas were not what I originally believed Masonry to be. The culture inside of Masonry varies from Lodge to Lodge. Not every Lodge is the same. Some Lodges are more open to young members' thoughts and ideas. Other Lodges have members who continually bring up old prejudices that we now recognize as morally erring. This has a great implication on the way the diverse group of young men in DeMolay perceive Masonry. As a young man in DeMolay my perception of my, now, brothers was based in righteousness and moral aptitude. The perception of righteousness changes when these young men join our fraternity because some Masons have deviated from lessons of Masonry designed to lead men down that righteous path. DeMolays are young and impressionable, so exposure to "the old ways" or "how we have always done things" may be an additional deterrent to these young men who might otherwise engage in Lodge activities and become active participants.

We have failed and have provided Member A with a poor impression of Masonry. He does not want to be a part of an organization that was false to him. So what is different about Member B; why did he not fade away? Member B recognizes the importance of change while respecting the tradition and ritual of Masonry as it is passed down. He wants to be the inspiration of change in his Lodge. By sticking around and slowly reminding the members of our obligations, teachings, and values, Member B might be able to get Member A back to the starting steps to becoming active in his Lodge.

No one expects to or wants to change a Lodge, but how can we approach a change in our attitude to be more mindful of the things we say around our young and new members? I have witnessed and heard countless stories of how many Masons, DeMolay, or other members are scolded or they hear inappropriate language used around Lodge

too often for comfort. Everyone has their own threshold for what they believe to be acceptable versus not, but who would want to be associated with an organization that has this kind of culture in some Lodges? Rather than stick around and be the better Brother to admonish them of their error, Member A sits idly by and waits for the craft to change. Who can blame them? Would you want to be around a Lodge who did not make you feel welcome or was completely different from the initial perspective that was given to you for so many years? By neglecting to take action we are being false to ourselves and our obligations.

Between Member A and Member B, whose perspective has the greater impact? Would I tell these two perspectives without many brethren who can attest to Member A's and agree? Be mindful brethren. Think about how we are influencing our younger audience. Think about how their perception of Freemasonry can transcend into great things for our fraternity and bring hundreds of DeMolays to eventually join. Never forget how little it takes for us to give a negative perception.

Maybe the cause of this educational moment will not do much of anything for most of our members, but our craft is hurting and we cannot deny that. Member A represents about 95% of the DeMolays who become members of Masonry who either did not join Masonry or did join, but do not come around because of something they were exposed to. Member B represents the other 5% who believe they will slowly be the impact and change for their Lodges. I am a part of that 5%. I guarantee you know a DeMolay who represents the 95%. I would even go as far to say this goes deeper than just DeMolays. This impacts forthcoming Lodge members with no prior connection to Masonry as well. Be the inspiration brethren. Do not follow the change. Be the change.